



Afternoon Alert - Friday, August 4, 2017

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HEADLINES

Noon news

Most TV networks gave top play to reports on Typhoon Noru, warning of heavy rain on Amami Oshima Island. In a report on the launch of the new Abe cabinet, NHK said Foreign Minister Kono will make his diplomatic debut right away by visiting the Philippines from Sunday to attend ASEAN related meetings. The official is expected to take part in a trilateral foreign ministerial session with the U.S. and Australia. He will also hold separate talks with his Chinese and ROK counterparts.

POLITICS

- [Gist of PM Abe's news conference on his new cabinet lineup, Aug. 3](#) (Yomiuri)

Abe puts constitutional revision on backburner

NHK's "News Watch 9" aired a live interview with Prime Minister Abe, who changed the cabinet lineup earlier in the day. He acknowledged that the people lost confidence in his administration and stated that the new cabinet will try to restore public support by implementing policies steadily while addressing the questions and doubts held by the public about various scandals involving the defense and education ministries. The premier said he will try to listen to the opinions of those who disagree with him. The prime minister toned down his rhetoric on his signature policy of revising the Constitution. Asked if he still plans to adhere to his controversial proposal to amend the nation's supreme law in 2020 by adding a clause to Article 9 making the existence of the SDF explicit, Abe said: "My administration's top policy priority will continue to be economic reconstruction....

Constitutional revision will not take place unless discussions deepen.... I have played a role in igniting and deepening national discussions on constitutional amendment. The Diet is responsible for initiating an amendment. It is up to the LDP and the parliament [whether to go ahead with revisions]."

When asked about his recent teleconference with President Trump about North Korea, Abe quoted the U.S. leader as saying that the U.S. and Japan are strong security partners and that America's defense commitment to Japan remains ironclad. The prime minister said: "The President promised and clearly stated that the United States will defend Japan without fail." Abe underscored that it is time to step up the pressure, adding that dialogue with the defiant regime will be possible only after it takes concrete steps toward denuclearization.

Abe's goal of revising Constitution becomes elusive

All regular nightly news programs on Thursday reported extensively on the cabinet reshuffle by Prime Minister Abe, with former Kyodo News Managing Editor Goto saying on TV-Asahi's "Hodo Station" that the new cabinet lineup indicated that the embattled prime minister has probably given up on amending the Constitution in 2020. The journalist said the appointment of former Foreign Minister Kishida, who is an opponent of amending Article 9, as chairman of the LDP Policy Research Council, which is responsible for drafting policies on all key issues, shows that Abe had no choice but to prioritize securing his power base over pursuing personal policy goals. Goto also said the departure of most of Abe's "friends" from the Kantei and the cabinet as a result of the reshuffle signifies that the "Kantei's power monopoly" has ended and the LDP will probably be able to enjoy a greater say in the administration's decision making from now on.

The commentator also speculated that the appointment of Taro Kono as foreign minister might be a message from Abe to China and South Korea about Tokyo's willingness to establish a rapport with them, explaining that Kono is a well-known foreign policy liberal and that his father Yohei Kono is held in high regard by many Chinese and Koreans for releasing the 1993 "Kono Statement" on comfort women, in which the GOJ apologized to the women who were forced by the Imperial Japanese Army to provide sexual services during WWII.

- [Editorial: Restoring public trust in politics is urgent for new cabinet](#) (Nikkei)
- [Editorial: Cabinet reshuffle – Don't stop move to amend Constitution](#) (Sankei)
- [Editorial: With Cabinet reshuffled, Abe should end habit for cover-ups](#) (The Asahi Shimbun)
- [Key upcoming political events](#) (Mainichi)
- [Shinjiro Koizumi to serve as LDP's chief deputy secretary-general](#) (Sankei)
- [New Abe cabinet team to step up encirclement of North Korea](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Constitutional revision likely to divert from Abe's envisioned schedule](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Top bureaucrat to serve as head of Cabinet Personal Affairs Bureau](#) (Yomiuri)

- [Abe's last chance to recover](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Abe cabinet support rate rebounded after past two reshuffles](#) (Mainichi)
- [Cartoon: Cabinet reshuffle](#) (Sankei)
- [Cartoon: President Trump and PM Abe](#) (Mainichi)
- [Prime minister's schedule on Aug. 3](#) (Nikkei)

INTERNATIONAL

- [Japan looks to draw more international conferences](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Editorial: Trump's unprincipled staff choices deepen turmoil in White House](#) (The Japan News)
- [Ambassador Kennedy played key role in persuading President Obama to visit Hiroshima](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)

ECONOMY

- [Business community hails Abe's new cabinet lineup](#) (Mainichi)
- [Dealing with Japan-EU EPA to be first test for new Farm Minister Saito](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Smaller tuna catch quota to be cut](#) (The Japan News)
- [TPP negotiations sans U.S. to reach a turning point this autumn](#) (Asahi)
- [Japan livestock, dairy farmers call for measures to address Japan-EU EPA](#) (Mainichi)
- [76.1% of university graduates secure jobs](#) (The Japan News)

EDUCATION

- [Editorial: Equal education opportunities top priority in tuition waivers for pro-N. Korea schools](#) (The Mainichi)

SECURITY

[Malicious ransomware reveals vulnerabilities of computer software](#)

NHK's "Close-up Gendai+" took up the global "WannaCrypt" ransomware outbreak since May, noting that it is extremely difficult to combat this type of malware as it is programmed to detect defects in source code for Windows operating systems. As it is said to be impossible even for talented computer engineers and programmers to create "bug-free" source code, computer software and online service providers are desperate to train "white hat hackers" who are capable of identifying software vulnerabilities. The Japanese government also launched a national initiative in April this year to foster white hat hackers based on the assessment that the nation will need an additional 200,000 computer security experts by 2020 to safeguard computer networks around Japan. The show also took up a separate effort to protect computers from dangerous ransomware attacks by encoding information stored in computers and cyberspace using an innovative encryption methodology.



Okinawa reacts coolly to cabinet reshuffle

Ryukyu Shimpo and Okinawa Times reported extensively on the cabinet reshuffle by Prime Minister Abe, projecting that although new Foreign Minister Kono and Defense Minister Onodera are known "liberals," the Abe administration's position on U.S. base issues will remain unchanged since the Kantei will continue to be managed by Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga, who is a staunch proponent of the existing Futenma relocation plan. Local officials are reportedly pessimistic about the new cabinet taking a soft approach toward the island prefecture. The dailies expressed disappointment with the appointment of Tetsuma Esaki as minister of state for Okinawa affairs, noting that the 71-year-old politician has almost no connection with the prefecture. Some prefectural government officials are reportedly hoping that the new foreign minister will be sympathetic to local calls for SOFA revision since he previously held a key position in the LDP's policy taskforce on the agreement governing the status of U.S. service members in Japan.